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El Al Holds British Responsible for Bus Terror Attack

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JERUSALEM—The managing director of El Al, the Israeli airline, said Monday that the airline holds British authorities responsible for a terrorist attack Sunday on a bus carrying El Al personnel in London.

At dawn Monday, in retaliation for the assault on the bus, the Israeli air force strafed two targets in Lebanon that were described here as bases of the Palestine Liberation Organization. A radical PLO group had claimed responsibility for the attack in London.

Two persons were killed and nine injured in the assault on the bus. Reports from Beirut indicated that at least five were killed and 14 wounded in the air strikes.

An Israeli government official said that Palestinian terrorists were using violence in an effort to cause the failure of the Mideast peace talks that are scheduled to get under way Sept. 5 at Camp David, Md. But the airline's managing director, Mordechai Hod, blamed the British more than the Palestinians for Sunday's attack in London's Mayfair district.

"We regard the British authorities as responsible for the murderous terrorist attack on the crew of El Al," he said.

He criticized the British specifically for not permitting Israeli security personnel to carry their weapons beyond the airport.

Hod said that Israel has tried for years to get permission from British authorities to arm its security men, who fly armed on El Al flights but must check their weapons with British customs before leaving the airport. The request has been repeated recently in the face of increased terrorist activity. British spokesmen said the request has been denied because the British are responsible for security within their country.

"If the British claim they are responsible for security, then they must bear the responsibility for what happened," Hod said.

An official in London said that the police "take such precautions as they consider necessary. They do their best but unfortunately it is impossible to guarantee complete security, as terrorist attacks in other countries have shown."

There was no official Israeli government censure of the British, although one official said privately:

"Even the British police don't carry weapons. The only people there who carry guns are criminals and terrorists."

The Israeli government established a committee Monday to seek ways of improving security abroad, the panel made up of representatives of El Al, the Transport Ministry and the security services.

In London, the British government expressed its repugnance at the attack on the bus there but said at the same time that it regretted the loss of life in the Israeli raids in Lebanon.

"However great the provocation, such reprisals merely perpetuate the cycle of violence," a Foreign Office spokesman said.

Washington took a similar view. A State Department spokesman condemned the "savage act of terrorism" in London but added, in view of the reprisal raids, "We deplore the cycle of violence."

The Israeli warplanes struck at first light in Lebanon, hitting what were described as a base at Damour, 11 miles south of Beirut, and a training base near a refugee camp at Bourj el Barajneh, on Beirut's south side.

The Israeli military provided no details except that all the planes involved returned safely. Informed sources said that Damour is a training base for terrorists and a headquarters where missions abroad are planned. They said that the Bourj el Barajneh facility is the central training base for Palestinian operations in Lebanon.

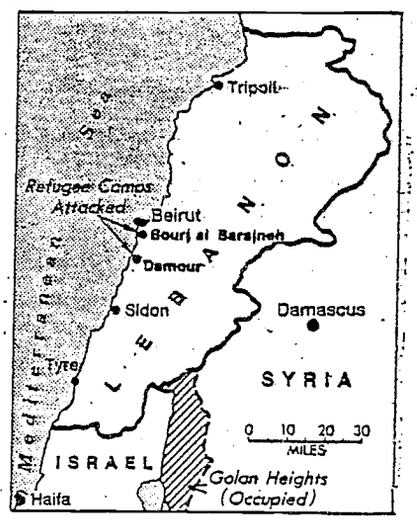
Reports from Beirut described Bourj el Barajneh as a stronghold of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a PLO faction headed by George Habash. A splinter group of the PFLP, calling itself the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-Special Operations, had claimed responsibility for the London attack, but a PFLP spokesman said that the Habash organization had nothing to do with it.

Witnesses to the morning air strikes were quoted as saying that two Israeli jets strafed and rocketed the camp at Bourj el Barajneh and that three others hit Damour. All the casualties were said to have been recorded at Bourj el Barajneh.

It was the second time this month that Israel had attacked Lebanese targets in reprisal for a guerrilla raid.

Meir Amit, the Israeli minister of transportation said that El Al would stiffen its security measures abroad.

British authorities announced that they had tightened security at Heathrow Airport, which services El Al flights, and at the Europa Hotel, where El Al crews stay.



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